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ABSTRACT

This article reviews literature on sex role change in children and points to areas which need further research. Competing ideologies which support or reject sex typing of role behaviors are briefly discussed in the introduction. The sources of sex role change are divided into two categories: (1) planned direct intervention programs and (2) natural or cultural change, i.e., the economic, political, and social movements which predispose individuals to modify their lifestyle activities and value systems. Three natural or cultural sources of change in roles are discussed. First, the effects of the Women's Liberation Movement on the resocialization both of the self and of the other are noted; these effects include an increase in assertiveness, changes in perceptions of the desirability of sex-role personality traits, entry into previously male-dominated professions and changes in the presentation of sex roles by various media. Second, literature is cited which suggests that changes in family composition (size of family, distribution of responsibilities, number of parents in home) affect the sex role attitudes of children. Third, although little is said to be known of the effects of Title IX, evidence from direct intervention research is employed to indicate some of its likely effects. Five areas are noted in which further research is needed; discrimination among components of sex roles; connections between attitudes and behavior and the influence of ideology on research and intervention; techniques for measuring children's sex role knowledge, attributions, preferences and behavior; and the aptitude-treatment-interaction effects related to sex role stereotyping. (Author/BH)

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CHANGING SEX ROLES

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I chose to discuss changing sex roles because there is a prevailing ideology in the social sciences today that somehow stereotyped sex roles and traditional sex typing are undesirable, unhealthy, and should be eliminated from our life styles. Conversely, we now have a reconstituted ideology which asserts that non-stereotyped sex roles, including a move toward psychological androgyny, are desirable, healthy and should replace traditional cultural sex roles. I have been thinking about these prevalent ideologies and the implications they hold for future research trends in psychology. The recent upswing on sex role research suggests that we have been generating much heat and a little bit of light. Today, I would like to direct my discussion to three questions which relate to the application of psychological research on sex roles to the real world. First, what are the major social forces which currently militate toward changes in male and female sex roles; second, what are the demonstrated effects, if any, of these changes on socio-cultural sex-typed behaviors?; and thirdly, what might be the implications of these changes for directions in psychological research?

Let me preface my remarks with a clarification of my use of the term sex roles here. If we think of sex roles as a kind of job description, then we can classify these roles into four broad components: choice of job, specific tasks to be completed on the job, sets of interpersonal, achievement and task-related behaviors used in completing.

these tasks, and lastly, internal reactions such as attributions, cognitions, preferences and values about each of these previous components. Clearly, this global conception of sex roles is very complex indeed, and transcends more than simply masculinity, femininity and androgyny. Because of this complexity, one sex-role component cannot be expected, a priori, to relate to other components, and the relations that do appear may vary across persons, situations, and tasks. However, all of these four components of socio-cultural sex roles operate, at one time or another, to differentiate and segregate the life-style choices of males and females in American society.

The prevailing ideologies influence our research focus when we decide what to observe and measure, how to measure it, what sex role behaviors are desirable, and what needs to be changed. The earlier ideologies, based upon Freudian theory, encouraged psychologists to support sex-role stereotyped attitudes, behaviors, preferences and life-span choices. This nativistic ideology encouraged us to modify and suppress cross sex behavior as unnatural, and to nurture passivity and affiliation in females as well as dominance and independence in males. The ideology also influenced our research efforts, so that we invested much energy into examining the determinants of appropriate sex-typing, especially in males. Consumate with the theory, we assumed that the presence and salience of the like sex parent was essential for appropriate sex typing to take place.

The current ideology is reflected in the women's liberation movement, Title IX amendment of the civil rights act, and Bem's (1974)

expanded concept of androgyny. In essence, the newer ideology asserts that sex-typing into role behaviors is bad for people; it restricts their behavioral flexibility, their opportunities for access to important life reinforcers, and suppresses in both males and females some potentially rewarding interpersonal behaviors. Therefore, sex-role stereotyping provides persons with relatively fewer opportunities to effectively meet their life goals and to cope with interpersonal stress. Some of the research stemming from this newer ideology focuses on scale development to measure a revised bi-dimensional conception of androgyny, and seeks to compare the characteristics and adjustment potential of androgynous and sex-typed persons. We see an upswing in careful studies of family composition, and of dyadic relationships; person to person; child-parent, and student-teacher, that might elicit or support sex-typed behavior. More recently, we find some attempts to alter sex-typed behavior attributions and choices through experimental and program manipulations.

The outcomes of these diverse research efforts have been first, to document the overriding influence of traditional sex-role ideology on the way most American children are socialized and educated, and secondly, to suggest where changes are taking place. The documentation of sex role stereotyping on the behavior of social agents is impressive. For example, it suggests that regardless of initial sex differences between males and females, social institutions are a strong force in maintaining the status quo. Most of the available research suggests

that at the end of the 1970's, sex-role stereotyping for the socialization of children seems to be alive and well. What are the factors that impel us to change?

I can see two broad sources for change, that I will term natural and planned. The sources of natural change have to do with the economic, political and social movements that predispose individuals to modify their lifestyle activities and value systems. The planned sources of change involve direct intervention programs designed to alter specific sex-role stereotypes, interpersonal behaviors, or opportunities for action and expanded choice. Among the natural or cultural sources of change, three appear most relevant to how sex roles are modified; these are first, the WLM, second, the changing composition of American families, and third, the 1972 Title IX amendment to the civil rights act. Let's look at each of these in turn and consider the evidence for sex role modifications.

The ideologies of the WLM are far reaching, and it would be difficult to pinpoint all sources of impact. Barbara Polk (1979) classifies the influence of the WLM into two categories, resocialization of the self, and resocialization of the other. These seem to be convenient handles on which to hang our evidence. The earliest efforts stemming from the WLM were directed toward resocialization of the self. Here, CR groups appeared in many American communities, not only for women but for men as well. Such groups provide support for exploring new

options for dealing with personal growth styles, and with the power balances between males and females. These CR groups frequently focus on redefining the role of the male or female and providing support for role exploration. Most of these outcomes have not been documented with controlled research studies. However, one familiar spin-off of this approach is the plethora of assertiveness books available today. Psychological research on assertiveness training (Rich & Schroeder, 1976) has been beset by multiple methodology problems, but there are many excellent studies which attest to its effectiveness in varying situations. As women, in particular, become more assertive, they may act to modify other aspects of their life space. One possible outcome is increased female career development, with its demonstrable effects on the psychological development of both daughters and sons.

A second important outcome in resocialization of the self is reflected in studies on desirable sex-role personality traits. Weinraub and Hill (Note 1) in a sample of 400 college students, report that the real parent is described as sextyped on the BSRI, but the ideal parent tends to be androgynous. In particular, the ideal father was more feminine than the real father. What are the implications of these ideologies on the kinds of parents these students will be themselves? In a similar vein, Jean Block (Note 2) gave Q-sorts to children at various age levels, finding that at all ages, children's real selves tend to be sex-typed, but their ideal selves tend to be more androgynous.

For school counselors, a potent source of traditional stereotyping, Petro & Putnam (1979) found that 3/4 of the stereotyped attributions obtained 7 years earlier were no longer seen by these counselors as differentiating males and females. Although we have some evidence that stereotyping on questionnaires may imperfectly reflect sterotyped behavior in real situations, we also have ample evidence that individuals who describe themselves as androgynous tend to behave differently than sex-typed individuals in a variety of sex-role correlated situations (Worell, 1978). Resocialization of the self is also taking place in many other spheres, such as increasing numbers of women entering male-dominated professions, and vying for positions in male-dominated organizations. We do not know the extent to which the job selection aspect of these sex role changes will affect task performance or self-attributions. However, new roles demand new behaviors, and it remains for future reserach to examine these behavioral outcomes of self-resocialization.

The second area of impact of the WLM has been in resocializing others. Here, I will touch only on changes in the media, which portray revised role models in school texts, reading materials, television, and film. Maureen Mahoney (Note 3) examined Sears, Roebuck catalogues from 1905 to the present, finding a decrease in frequency of sex-stereotyped toys. However, boys toys are still more numerous than girls, and have greater diversity for play. All of the major publishing

houses, as well as the APA, have put out new guidelines for non-sexist language, a subtle form of change in media tactics. The long term effects of media changes remain to be assessed. Early returns on changes in stereotyping of main characters in school texts, in separate studies done by Connor & Serbin (1978), Guttentag & Bray (1976), Schau (Note 4), and Smith (Note 5), show either no effects, reversed effects, or only transitory effects of direct intervention in sex-role stereotyping of media for children. Further research needs to examine the conditions under which these changes can be maximally effective. For example, Karen Gouze (Note 6) found that stories with aggressive content increased the preferences of highly aggressive children for subsequence aggressive TV content, regardless of the positive or negative outcomes of the aggressive acts.

Let me move on now to a second important cultural change that is correlated with sex-role changes: family composition. Today's family is smaller, with fewer children, working mothers in over 50%, with 2/3 of single mothers working, and there is a decrease in male employment. Children are less likely to grow up with siblings. Hoffman (Note 7) points out that for females, this may mean decreased opportunities for child care responsibilities and learning nurturant behaviors. For males, it may mean greater exposure to mother if she is home and greater responsibility for household responsibility if she is working. Further, we know that despite a continued inequality in sharing tasks, husbands of working women help in the home more than husbands of non-working women (Hoffman, 1977). Increased participation

by fathers may provide an alternate model for nurturance and task assignment. What are some of the family outcomes here?

In comparison to daughters of non-working mothers, Miller (1975) found daughters of working mothers to be less stereotyping of tasks and more flexible in life choices for women in the world. Hoffman (Note 7) found daughters of working women to be lower on femininity, to see women as more competent, and to have less stereotyped perceptions of both women and men. Sons perceived males as warmer and more expressive. Other studies have found girls of working mothers to be more independent, active, and achieving, and have higher esteem for their mothers. Marantz & Mansfield (1977) also found less stereotyping on both a list of 50 activities and 18 personality traits for daughters of working mothers. How about the sons? In a nicely designed study that examined multiple components of sex roles, Derdiarian and Snipper (Note 8) found that adolescent sons of working mothers are more likely to be androgynous on the Bem scale, to endorse shared roles for household tasks and decision-making, and to see less negative outcomes for female success on the Horner scale. Further, in direct interactions with either a female adult or female peer, these boys were more expressive, smiled more, had more eye contact, and initiated more conversation. Interestingly enough, androgyny scores did not predict these behavioral outcomes as well as working status of the mother. Male androgyny, however, may have a cycling effect on family life. A recent study by Graeme Russell (1978) on participation of fathers in child care,

found that andro fathers (BSRI) carried out more child care tasks and interacted more with their children than did masculine-type fathers. Of course, we cannot attribute a causative effect here, but the findings are titilating to consider. If fathers participate more in household tasks, and interact more with their children, they may provide an alternate role model for both males and females, and we may see an increased androgynization of both daughters and sons.

The literature on single mothers is less extensive, but tends to replicate that of working mothers. It remains to be seen whether the standard literature on the reduced masculinity and increased passivity of father-absent sons may reveal an increase in androgynous orientations as well. A whole new literature may eventuate from our new ideology about how good it is for women to work.

Ancillary areas of research on only children, daughters of father-absent homes, and sex role orientations of children in daycare, may provide more information about changing sex roles, family composition, and child-care arrangements. A recent study on daycare children by Belsky ( ) did show decreases in sex-stereotyped play as compared to home care children. Clearly, more research is needed here.

A third force in the American political scene relates to Title IX amendment of the civil rights act. As a function of the mandate to equal opportunities in education, schools are now moving toward equal participation in formerly sex-typed activities. Schools are beginning to pay attention to stereotyped curriculum and textbooks, and to sex-typed teacher and counselor procedures. What are the effects of these varied

interventions on the changing sex roles of our school children? Unfortunately, little research has been completed which definitely outlines a body of results for educational change. A few studies have examined changing sex-role stereotypes in primers and texts and television. A few others have looked at program results when major curriculum and training changes are initiated within a school system.

Unfortunately, none of this research tells enough about differing effects of interventions on boys and girls, by teacher, by age, by grade, and by previous cognitions and behaviors of the child. At this point in time, we do not know just what needs to be changed and how best to go about it. Nevertheless, we can draw at least four conclusions which appear to emerge from the direct intervention research:

1. For many stereotyped sex role behaviors, it is easier to modify the behavior of girls than of boys. This outcome is found for textbook, toy and television stereotypes, career choices, and sex-typed trait attributions. Wolf (1976) found girls model sex-reversed toy play more than boys do. O'Connor found that preschool boys show higher palmar sweat than girls when asked to wear cross-sex play costumes (Note 9). Flerx and her associates (1976) found that after non-stereotyped story telling sessions 4 and 5 year old boys still insist that boys are smarter than girls, while girls are willing to admit more equality on this trait. Guttentag (1976) found boys remarkabley resistant to her training modules and even found an increase

in sex-typing on some measures in 9th grade boys. There are many viable explanations for these outcomes. One possibility is that female roles are more dependent on feedback from others, while male roles involve separation from others, which leaves the males freer from concern with external pressure to change. Also, the consistent finding that boys are initially more stereotyped on many measures than girls and are more punitively socialized for cross-sex activities, are other plausible antecendents.

2. It is easier to modify immediate than long-range behaviors. Research by Serbin, Conner & Citron (1978) is an example of this outcome, whereby modified sex-sterotyped independent and dependent behavior return to baseline when external contingenices of teacher attention are removed. Again, it is possible to generate a variety of explanations for this outcome, ranging from the innate and gender-constant nature of sex role behavior to discrimination learning and transfer of training principles.

3. It is easier to modify verbal sex-role stereotypes or attributions than to change observable behaviors in the natural environment. Weber and her associates (Note 10) failed to obtain a correlation between teacher sex-role attitudes and stereotyped behavior toward students in the classroom. Sorbonne (Note 11) reports that after training, elementary teachers describe their teaching behavior as non-sexist (e.g., equality toward boys and girls), but that significant differences appear in teacher question-asking and attention to boys as compared

to girls. It seems that general instructions, and awareness training, are insufficient to generalize to specific differential teacher interaction patterns with boys and girls.

4. Finally, the evidence so far suggests that it is easier to change some behaviors than others, and that this relationship interacts with the age of the target person. Guttentag (1976) found that differing sex role response categories changed differentially across age and sex groups following a six-week intervention program. A tentative hypothesis here is that behaviors or role prescriptions distal to the individual are less resistant to change than more proximal ones. Thus, ideal trait descriptions and "can do" career roles are changing at a fast pace. People of all ages are more willing to state relatively androgynous ideal selves, ideal fathers, and equalized possibilities for career opportunities. When observed in specific behavioral settings, these same persons frequently fail to utilize, or ascribe to themselves, the same androgynous behavior they profess as an ideology. It seems to be a case of how and when practice will catch up with preaching.

My final purpose in this paper was to relate these diverse findings about change to implications for psychological research. Let me offer five.

1. First, as Spence & Helmrich (1978) have pointed out, I think we need to make clear discriminations among various components of the sex role concept, especially for children. It is clear that

trait-like personality characteristics, job or career selection, task performance, values, attributions and ideals, are varying components of a larger conceptualization. Studies on sex role changes need to take into account more than one variable. Derdierian and Snipper's study was a good example of measuring many facets of sex role functioning, not all of which correlated highly. It may be that the relevant content domains for children's sex role concepts are quite different from that of the adult.

2. We need more refined techniques for measuring children's sex role knowledge, attributions, and preferences, as well as their actual behavior in natural situations. Some of the results with children may be artifacts of our measuring instruments. At recent symposia I attended, more than a dozen different measures were being used to assess children's sex-role typing, many of which had little or no reliability or validity. Smith, Goldman & Keller (Note 12), find that the ever-popular concealed "It" scale bears no relationship to children's actual play activities, and Crandall (Note 13) and Urberg (Note 14), find differences when children are asked for overlapping choices, as well as no sex-typed choice, on a sex-role measure.

3. We need more attention to what children and people do, as well as what they say they believe. The intimate relationships between beliefs and behavior demand that we obtain behavioral validation of our sex-role measures according to the relevant domains of behavior

being assessed. That changes in teacher stereotyping may fail to reflect what they do in classroom is an outstanding example of this problem.

4. In the area of behavior change, it appears that we need more attention to the aptitude-treatment-interaction effect. That is, what relevant entering characteristics of children relate to the effectiveness of what programs aimed at modifying what aspects of sex-stereotyped behaviors? Guttentag's experience with 9th grade boys and Gouze with aggressive children observing TV are good examples of the need for more attention to ATI effects.

5. Finally, how does our ideology about the good, the beautiful and the true enter into out measurement, our interventions, and the kinds of behaviors we seek to change? Are we imposing a new ideology without regard to individual preferences, dispositions, or possibly temperament characteristics? Should we try to make all little boys more dependent and all little girls more independent of adult approval? These are hard questions with which every researcher needs to grapple before embarking on a program for changing sex roles.

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